

8 2. Rites of Irrigation

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These conjectures are confirmed by the little we know Moumi both of the popular and of the official Egyptian religion. "f 9 ^, "

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Thus we are told that the Egyptians held a festival of **Isis** summe: at the time when the Nile began to rise. They believed ^nTbe that the goddess was then mourning for the lost Osirls, and to rise. that the tears which dropped from her eyes swelled the Impetuous tide of the river.¹ Hence in Egyptian Inscriptions Isis is spoken of as she " who maketh the Nile to swell and overflow, who maketh the Nile to swell In his season."² Similarly the Toradjas of Central Celebes Imagine that showers of rain are the tears shed b}^ the compassionate gods In weeping for somebody who is about to die; a shower in the morning Is to them an Infallible omen of death.³ However, an uneasy suspicion would seem to have occurred to the Egyptians that perhaps after all the tears of the goddess might not suffice of themselves to raise the water to the proper level; so In the time of Rameses II. the king used on the first day of the flood to throw into the Nile a written order commanding the river to do Its duty, and the submissive stream never failed to obey the royal mandate.⁴ Yet the ancient belief survives In a modified form to this day. For the Nile, as we saw, begins to rise in June about the time of the summer solstice, and the people still attribute its Increased volume to a miraculous drop which falls Into the river on the night of the seventeenth of the month. The charms and divinations which they

practise

on that mystic night in order to ascertain the length
of their
own life and to rid the houses of bugs may well
date from
a remote antiquity.⁵ Now If Osiris was in one of his
aspects

¹ Pausanias, x. 32. 18, streaming down from his eyes.
See

² E. A. Wallis Budge, *Osiris and T. A. Joyce, "The
Weeping God,"
the Egyptian Resurrection* ii. 278. *Essays and Studies
presented to William*

³ N. Adrian! en Alb. C. Knijft, *De Ridge-way* (Cambridge,
1913), pp. 365-
*Rare e-sprekende Toradjas van Midden- 374-
Celebes* (Batavia, 1912), i. 273. The ⁴ This we learn from
inscriptions

more civilized Indians of tropical at Silsilis. See A.
Moret, *Mysteres*

America, who practised agriculture *Egyptiens* (Paris, 1913), p.
I So.

and—"had developed a barbaric art, ⁵ E. W. Lane, *Manners and
Customs*

appear to have commonly represented *of the Modern Egyptians*
(Paisley and

the rain-god in human form with tears London,

1895), c^« xxvj- PP- 495 *SfJ*>

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